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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. MIDTERM ELECTIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies gave significant coverage November 14 to two DPP legislators who decided to resign effective this week in protest of the party's handling of the corruption scandal implicating President Chen Shui-bian and his wife. News coverage also focused on follow-on investigations into the Presidential allowance for state affairs case; and on Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou, who is to be questioned Tuesday over alleged misuse of his special mayoral expense fund. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's largest-circulation daily, ran a banner headline on page two that said "The President: Stepping down Would Be a Relief, But One Must Not Easily Discard One's Responsibilities."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News" criticized the DPP for supporting President Chen, "a big corrupt criminal and a big liar." The article said both U.S. President George W. Bush and his party have been punished by their voters and asked if Taiwan's voters will use their ballots to punish President Chen and the DPP and teach them a lesson. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" urged Taiwan's policy-makers to prepare for a "change in skies" in the United States in the wake of the stunning defeat suffered by the Republican Party in last week's midterm elections. End summary.

A) "[Do We] Need to Give 'Chen Shui-bian and DPP] Another Chance?"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (11/14):

"... Last week's U.S. midterm elections provided an opportunity from which [Taiwan] can learn a lesson. American voters once fully supported [U.S. President George W.] Bush's war in Iraq and war on terrorism, but they have come to realize that the war in Iraq and the war on terrorism contained, to a great extent, the operations of populism. The midterm election results showed that the Republican Party suffered a severe defeat, and Bush immediately admitted that his Iraqi policy needs to be reviewed, and he quickly ordered Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to step down. American voters are awake now, but what about Taiwan's voters? Bush and his party have been punished by their voters and have learned their lesson; will President Chen Shui-bian and the DPP be punished by their voters and learn their lesson as well? What's more, Bush's loss of public support is primarily a result of his policy errors, but Chen, on the other hand, is a big corrupt criminal and a big liar. ..."

B) "U.S. Polls Mean Change in Skies"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (11/14):

"Taiwan policy-makers should begin to prepare for a 'change in skies' in the United States after the stunning defeat handed to the

right-wing Republican administration of U.S. President George W. Bush by the Democratic Party in mid-term congressional elections earlier this month. ... The nature of the Senate and gubernatorial results in particular may serve as a bellwether for the November 2008 presidential election since they revealed shifts in several key states. ... The most important reason is that such a change promises the world hope that the world's most powerful nation may return to internationalism after two terms of Bush's fundamentalist 'America First' unilateralism. ... Although Bush's administration has generally been supportive of Taiwan in security and defense matters, Bush has also periodically put intense pressure on Taiwan to complement his unilateralist agenda and has subordinated Taiwan's democratic deepening to Washington's efforts to build a partnership with Beijing in areas such as the North Korean nuclear weapons crisis. ..."

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